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Mission

We work to ensure that school food professionals have the resources, funding, and support they need to provide fresh, delicious, cooked-from-scratch meals that support the health of children and our planet.

Impact

Since the Chef Ann Foundation was founded in 2009, our work has impacted more than 3.4 million children and more than 14,000 schools in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.



125 Collective number of years our staff members have worked in school food service

17 Number of staff members in 2022 / 51 Number of staff members in 2023

14 Number of states our staff are located in

A Note From Chef Ann Cooper

It's been 15 years since I started the Chef Ann Foundation with my friend and colleague Beth Collins. What a wild ride it's been. It all started with the dream that all kids should get healthy food in school—and to do that, we needed to cook.

At a private school I was working at in New York, we cooked and the students ate it. Next, in Berkeley, California—my first foray into public schools—we cooked and again the students ate it. We eliminated flavored milk and ultra-processed foods. We reduced added sugars and made local procurement a priority. Our staff wore professional uniforms. Parents, school administrators, advocates, government officials, and other school food professionals took notice.

As more and more notice was taken, we were asked how we did it. What recipes did we use? What tools did we have? And, most often: How did we get the students to eat it? From these questions the idea of The Lunch Box—our free scratch-cooking resource library for K-12 schools—was born. Shortly after, in 2009, we founded The Chef Ann Foundation to advance school food systems change.

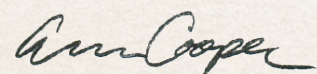
In the beginning, there were three of us. We might have been hidden away in an old storeroom in Boulder, Colorado but we loudly advocated for scratch cooking and eliminating

ultra-processed food in schools. Then, in 2010, we saw the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act come into being with Michelle Obama being a force for change.

Fast forward to the current day where at the White House Conference on Hunger President Biden talked about moving toward universal meals and scratch cooking in schools. Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack and his team have pushed for stronger nutrition standards, which will make school food even healthier in coming years. And now, eight states to date have passed universal school meals legislation.

This gives me hope that perhaps it won't be long before we see universal school meals become a national program and my dream—that it should be a birthright in this country that every child, every day, should have healthy food in schools and no child will ever be hungry—will become a reality. I will forever be thankful to our team, our supporters, and all of the school food professionals who have helped bring us to this moment.

I hope we all believe in dreams—they really can come true!



Founder & Board President



A Note From CEO Mara Fleishman



After the U.S Department of Agriculture ended its widely popular school meal waiver program in 2022, which provided free meals to all K-12 students regardless of household income, in 2023 it took significant steps toward increasing access to school meals again as well as increasing the quality of school meals.

The USDA expanded the Community Eligibility Provision, which enabled approximately 3,000 more school districts to serve free breakfast and lunch to all of their students. The USDA also awarded \$50 million in grants to support better quality school meals, as well as \$10 million in grants to expand K-12 nutrition education. The Chef Ann Foundation received funding through this initiative to launch Partnerships for Local Agriculture and Nutrition Transformation in Schools (PLANTS). This program will strengthen relationships among community-based food system stakeholders and school districts to expand scratch cooking and local procurement.

Further, the USDA also proposed updating the national school nutrition standards to limit added sugars for the first time in the history of school nutrition. It also proposed reducing sodium by 10% and 15% for school breakfast and lunch respectively, and reducing barriers for schools to purchase more local foods.

Yet, ultra-processed foods still dominate school meal programs. That's because the school food sector—which serves meals to nearly 30 million kids five days a week—presents a major profit opportunity. While the USDA was taking these important steps toward improving student health, Lunchables rolled out a line of products formulated for K-12 school meal programs.

But you and I know kids deserve more. We need to continue pushing to increase access to fresh, nourishing, appetizing school meals that cultivate healthy, fulfilling relationships with food for life. Thanks to supporters like you, we're seeing real progress. Once considered a "niche" cause, the Biden-Harris administration sees scratch cooking in schools central to improving public health and nutrition, and today the federal government is one of our strongest partners. Let's keep this momentum going.



Chief Executive Officer

“Thanks to supporters like you,
we’re seeing real progress...Today,
the federal government is one of
our strongest partners. Let’s keep
this momentum going.”





Cultivating a Workforce that Will Change School Food

Healthy School Food Pathway Fellows gather for a culinary training at Mt. Diablo Unified School District.



“The Chef Ann Foundation takes a systems approach to change. We ask ourselves: What are the broken pieces of the system that are creating barriers to serving healthier, fresher school meals? The school food workforce is at the top of the list. If we are not actively building the workforce that can create this change, then we are overlooking a critical system issue.”

Mara Fleishman
Chef Ann Foundation CEO

Building the school food workforce is one of the most effective things we can do to remove barriers to healthy school food.

The people who plan, procure, prepare, and serve meals to nearly 30 million K-12 students each school day have a direct impact on the health of our nation’s youth—and our food system at large. Despite their outsize influence on public health, environmental health, and student success, school food professionals remain undervalued and undertrained.

The Chef Ann Foundation and our partners are investing in the school food workforce like never before. In 2023, our Healthy School Food Pathway program kicked into high gear. Through our state and federally registered Pre-Apprenticeship, Apprenticeship, and Fellowship, Healthy School Food Pathway is designed to provide new and experienced school food professionals with paid, on-the-job training and experiential learning opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills they need to help schools transition from serving highly processed, heat-and-serve meals to serving fresh meals cooked from scratch.



52 Pre-Apprentices and **9 Apprentices** in California as well as **20 Fellows** from across the country participated in Healthy School Food Pathway in 2023.



26 school districts across California hosted Pre-Apprentices and Apprentices in 2023.

We completed comprehensive scratch cooking assessment reports for six of these districts—which collectively serve meals to **88,918 students**—to offer practical recommendations for increasing scratch cooking.



We provided technical assistance to three districts—which collectively serve meals to **12,529 students**—resulting in the districts implementing two new scratch-made meals to their menus and procuring five new locally produced ingredients.



We worked with **Colorado** to begin designing its own iteration of Healthy School Food Pathway in 2023, while **Virginia** and **Wisconsin** partnered with us to begin designing their own iterations of the program in 2024.



Apprentice Spotlight Faith Huss

On an average day, Healthy School Food Pathway Apprentice Faith Huss helped plan menus, develop and refine new scratch-cooked meal recipes, improve the efficiency of kitchen operations, and much more at Cypress School District in Orange County, California. The district serves meals and snacks to more than 2,500 students daily. One stand-out item Faith learned to prepare for students was protein-packed, scratch-made hummus.

Tackling School Food Waste

There are nearly 100,000 K-12 cafeterias in the U.S. – that’s nearly seven times the number of McDonald’s establishments in the U.S.

Because of the K-12 sector’s sheer scale, schools can generate a massive amount of food waste. The good news is sustainable practices are possible in every kitchen. Schools can drastically cut waste by making relatively small and simple changes.

One such change is switching from serving milk in single-use containers to serving it from a bulk milk dispenser and

using reusable cups. To help schools transition to using bulk milk dispensers, we launched our Bulk Milk program. Thanks to support from the Posner Foundation and Life Time Foundation, in 2023 we awarded 43 grants to 18 districts across the U.S. that will provide nearly all of the equipment, materials, and training needed to implement a bulk milk serving system.

We also helped school food programs reduce waste in other ways, such as by switching from single-use trays and utensils to reusable ones; switching from serving individually wrapped, prepackaged foods to sourcing fresh, whole ingredients from local producers; and more.

Ithaca High School in Tompkins County, NY provides students reusable plates, bowls, cups, and utensils to reduce waste.



Moo-ving Toward Sustainability

The U.S. Department of Agriculture requires K-12 schools to offer students milk as part of the National School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs. Milk is the largest source of packaging and liquid waste in K-12 schools. By switching to serving milk in bulk, schools can save approximately 248 gallons of water and 30 pounds of carbon dioxide equivalents per student annually according to a World Wildlife Fund study. This would be like taking more than 145,000 gas-powered vehicles off the road each year.

“Chef Ann Foundation’s Bulk Milk program is a straightforward opportunity for reducing waste at an institutional scale while providing the added benefits of teaching kids about sustainability and supporting local farmers. We hope that other donors and grantmakers will join us in supporting this effective and unique opportunity to tackle food waste, educate children, and support our regional food systems.”

Hana Uman
Posner Foundation

Partnering with the U.S. Department of Agriculture

Our partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture demonstrates the astounding progress school food reform has made in a decade.

When the Chef Ann Foundation was founded fifteen years ago, transitioning from serving students ultra-processed, pre-packaged meals to serving students fresh, healthier meals made from scratch was often considered a niche cause. Today, the USDA is one of our key partners.

The Chef Ann Foundation is supporting the USDA's Healthy Meals Incentives Initiative by partnering with Action for Healthy Kids to offer 264 small and rural districts the

opportunity to receive scratch-cooking technical assistance. These districts were awarded grants of up to \$150,000 to improve the quality of their school meals.

Additionally, the USDA selected the Chef Ann Foundation as one of four cooperators to administer its Healthy Meals Incentives School Food System Transformation Challenge. Through this agreement, we launched a new grant program—Partnerships for Local Agriculture & Nutrition Transformation in Schools (PLANTS). PLANTS aims to build more equitable and sustainable school food supply chains while expanding scratch cooking by awarding up to \$4.8 million to eight collaborative projects.

“We see [the Chef Ann Foundation’s PLANTS Grant] as a critical step in aligning the cafeteria, the community, and the classroom.”

Marci McGill

Senior Director of Student Nutrition
at Anchorage School District (Alaska) & PLANTS grantee



Meeting Districts Where They Are — Then Moving the Needle Toward Scratch

Picture this: Thousands of students rely on you every school day for their meals. The meals you serve must adhere to complex nutritional standards set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

You're beholden to funding constraints, have limited cooking equipment, operate in an outdated facility, and are experiencing staffing shortages. Yet, you and your team are committed to transitioning from serving students processed, pre-packaged, heat-and-serve food to serving them meals cooked from scratch using fresh, whole, nutrient-dense ingredients.

Through our most hands-on initiative, Get Schools Cooking, we meet districts where they are so they can gradually transition to doing more scratch cooking and meet their school food goals despite constraints they may be facing. After conducting a comprehensive assessment of their menu,

financial position, facilities infrastructure, staffing, and marketing capacities, we help districts create a strategic plan and over the course of three years take actionable steps toward increasing their scratch cooking capacity.

In 2023, four districts—located in Tennessee, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Kansas—that collectively served meals to more than 11,000 students completed the Get Schools Cooking program. This work was made possible thanks to the support of Whole Kids Foundation and an anonymous funder.

We also welcomed a new cohort into the program, which includes seven districts in Texas, Alaska, Washington, Montana, Wisconsin, Maine, and Vermont. These districts represent 92 schools and have a combined enrollment of more than 55,000 students. This work was made possible thanks to the support of The Rachael Ray Foundation.



2020–2023 Get Schools Cooking

Top School District Accomplishments

- Began to offer students at least one scratch-made meal a day
- Learned to cook using raw proteins
- Hired an additional cook to increase production capacity
- Purchased coolers to safely store scratch-made food and whole ingredients
- Implemented salad bars to increase student fresh fruit and vegetable consumption
- Transitioned from single-serve to reusable serveware
- Installed bulk milk dispensers to eliminate milk carton waste
- Purchased staff uniforms to professionalize school food program

Building a Groundbreaking Marketing Campaign to Shift Perceptions About School Food Professionals

Innovative school food professionals across the country are skillfully and creatively reimagining what school food can and should be.

Yet, long-held misconceptions about the people who work in school food continue to undervalue their inherently important contributions. We partnered with the state of California to change this. In 2023, we conducted extensive audience research to lay the groundwork for our Powered by School Food Professionals campaign, which seeks to uplift the school food

workforce and showcase the myriad of ways in which they are reimagining school food.

To grow the school food reform movement, we must shift public perceptions about the school food workforce and demonstrate how this workforce directly impacts not only the health of children but also social equity, environmental sustainability, and local economies. Our multi-year, first-of-its-kind campaign seeks to model one way this can be done.



“More and more districts across California are sourcing local produce, hiring chefs, developing delicious recipes, and cooking high-quality meals for their students. I can’t wait to see where school food is going to go.”



Christina Lawson
Western Placer Unified
School District (California)



10 School Food Renegades Stirring Up Change

Chef Ann Cooper became known as the “Renegade Lunch Lady” when she sought to reimagine school food.

Little by little, she chipped away at deep-rooted institutional systems to move closer to a world where all children not only have access to healthy and satisfying meals every day, but also are equipped to cultivate

positive relationships with food for themselves, their communities, and the planet. Yet, work of this scale is never done alone. To honor the legacy of our organization’s founder as she celebrated her 70th birthday, we launched a campaign—**Stirring Up Change**—that recognized 10 school food changemakers who, in ways unique to them, embody the renegade spirit of Chef Ann Cooper.

“When school districts — collectively California’s largest restaurant system — procure locally, we’re able to make a massive dent in the distance produce has to travel, reducing vehicle pollutants and waste in processing and packaging, leading to fewer greenhouse gas emissions. [Additionally], partnerships between local school districts and small- and medium-scale local farmers help keep dollars in the community.”

— California First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom



Lola Bloom

DC Bilingual Public Charter School
(Washington, DC)

“Most of my team is from El Salvador, and a lot of our food reflects that...I know this makes our school unique and reminds our students of home.”



Mark Curtis

Austin Independent School District (TX)

“Our food service department is laser-focused on improving access to food on a very practical level...[Last year] this resulted in hundreds of extra meals served and easier access to healthy food at over 10 schools.”



Warren DeShields

Bridgeton Public Schools (NJ) & School Nutrition Association Northeast Regional Director

“[We] calculated that [over two years] we saved our parents over \$200,000, which could now be spent to cover other household bills.”



Nona Evans

Former President & Executive Director of Whole Kids

“[School meals] are paid for by each of us as taxpayers...Do we really want our kids served processed, fast food for the bulk of their daily calories? Of course not.”



Micha James

Monterey Peninsula Unified School District (CA)

“While our program is nowhere near fully scratch cooking, as we move in that direction we ensure that packaged foods utilize whole ingredients...and are void of artificial colors, sweeteners, and flavors, as well as other preservatives that have been shown to cause detrimental effects in a growing body.”



Randal Lane

West Contra Costa Unified School District Central Kitchen (CA)

“School food is steeped in numbers—calories, serving sizes, etc....I quantify food differently: How does it make me feel? Why am I eating it? Where does it come from?”



Erin Primer

San Luis Coastal Unified School District (CA)

“I hope to see a nationwide commitment to the health of our youth through universal free meals!...When school meals are fresh and delicious, ALL students want to participate, which destigmatizes [school food] and creates an inclusive environment.”



Nancy Skinner

California State Senator
California’s 9th Senate District

“We all know that school success is greatly improved when students aren’t hungry, and there are many reasons a student may show up at school hungry.”



Iris Tirado

Concordia Charter School, Inc. (AZ)

“Being a School Food Renegade means not accepting what everyone is doing as good enough. It means to look beyond the minimum requirements and strive to offer excellence and innovation whenever possible.”



What's on the Plate in 2024 and Beyond?

Facilitating State-Level Change

Each state has unique school food challenges that require tailor-made solutions. We're working with several states—including Arizona, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Virginia, and Wisconsin—on multi-year projects to help them move toward achieving their long-term goals: improving student health, environmental sustainability, and access to school meals.

Proving the Impact of Scratch

It's one thing for us to conceptually understand that scratch cooking produces the most nutritious food, empowers school food teams to have a positive impact on the environment, and supports community economies through local procurement. It's another thing to substantiate these claims through rigorous research and program evaluation. We are growing our capacity to measure and optimize outcomes for schools and districts, communicate our findings to stakeholders, and facilitate the widespread adoption of scratch-cooking initiatives.

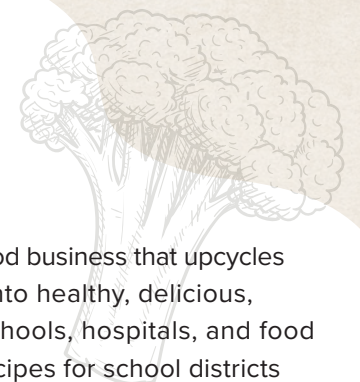
Procuring for Positive Impact

When schools transition to scratch cooking, they have more power to decide where to source their food from. They can purchase whole ingredients from producers and suppliers who prioritize organic production, environmental sustainability, social equity, animal welfare, or any other number of shared values. We are expanding our staff capacity to offer highly sought-after procurement technical assistance to schools.



Business Partner Spotlight Matriark Foods

We partnered with Matriark Foods—a food business that upcycles farm surplus and fresh-cut remnants into healthy, delicious, low-sodium vegetable products for schools, hospitals, and food banks—to develop USDA-compliant recipes for school districts using their cauliflower base sauce. This innovative product will be crafted from cauliflower deemed aesthetically unsellable to retail outlets and sourced from over 30 California farms. It will let districts replace some animal-based menu items with more environmentally sustainable plant-based alternatives—like cauliflower-based cheese sauce. Moreover, this initiative supports local California farms by generating revenue for produce that would otherwise be unsellable.



Our Supporters

We extend our deepest gratitude to the many individuals, businesses, foundations, corporations, and community groups that supported the Chef Ann Foundation through generous financial and in-kind assistance. We couldn't do this work without you.

> \$500,000

Anonymous
Chancellor's Office of the
State of California
Whole Kids Foundation
United States Department of Agriculture
Virginia Department of Education

\$100,000-\$499,999

Anonymous
From Now On Fund
Incite Foundation
Kaiser Permanente Foundation
Lifetime Foundation
Posner Foundation
The Park Foundation
Vital Projects Fund

\$50,000-\$99,999

Anonymous (2)
James C and Norma
I Smith Foundation
Newman's Own Foundation
Rachael Ray Foundation

\$25,000-\$49,999

Clif Family Foundation
The Giant Company
Kettering Family Foundation
Share Our Strength
Ann B Zekauskas Foundation

\$10,000-\$24,999

Dubchansky Family Foundation
Kevin Emore (In Kind)
Walter S Johnson Foundation
Robin and Kevin Luff
Sierra Harvest
Stillwater Foundation
Tromblee Foundation

\$5,000-\$9,999

AEC Trust
Andrew Cosgrove
Emily Friedberg
Donnell Kay Foundation
Robin and Kevin Luff
Renaissance Charitable Foundation

\$1,000-\$4,999

929 Event Series
Four Mile Capital
Ira and Mary Lou Alpert
Family Foundation
Bluestone Financial Advisors
BOK Financial
Ann Cooper
Community Foundation
of Boulder County
Gemini Trust
The Giving Block
Global Giving

Jerome S and Grace H Murray
Foundation
Johnson Ohana Foundation
MRB Foundation
Lauren Menschel
Tiffany Myers
Sherry Pitt
Brian and Diane Searles
Tom Spier
Wyman Family Foundation

\$500-\$999

Catherine Ames
Mercedes Cameron
Culinary Institute of America
Frederick Davies
Josh Dinar
Alison and Paul Friduss
Robin and Jarvis Friduss
AJ Grant
Chelsea Kepner
Meta / Facebook
Mary Rochelle
Amy Shipley
Sharon Theberge
Lisa E Wieland
Helene York

\$100-\$499

Sarah Acker
Amazon Smiles
Ruth Arabatzis
Sue Baer
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Benevity
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Kimberly Carpentiere
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Vanessa Cordeiro
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Sam Dragon
Brandy Dreibelbis
Juni Elston
Bernadette Emore
Jacquelyn Emore
Kate Emore
Linda Emore
Matan Farhi
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Nathan Finn
Stefanie Frangos
Susan Forbes
Russ Forester
Givinga Foundation
Maureen Fraser
Thomas Fraser
Clayton Freeman
Richard Gebhardt
Katya Georgieva
Brenna Gilmartin
Matt Given
Kelsey Glass
Allison Greene
Eriko Greeson
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Seth Haines
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Sonya Hausafus
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Katherine Huston
Jake Johnson
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Suzanne Jones

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Chad Kirk
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Jessica Lawrence
Adam Lefkowitz
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Naomi Livosi
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Collin Malone
Trey Mangers
Annie Marcinek
Simeon Margolis
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Cherreka Montgomery
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Jason Morton
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Sylvia Ng
Beth Niznik
Ashley Nordeen
Kyle Nottoli
Steve Nottoli
Tracey O'Donohue
Sean O'Fallon
Emily Pelland
Amy Petulla
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Luke Pezzimenti
Darcy Piceu

Jen Pringle
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Kristin Ransom
Michele Rebbeck
Rachel Reed Sandow
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Daniel Schmitz
Eli Seidman
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Ronnie Sidman
Carly Silberman
Andy Sklewer
Justin Soltis
Geraldine Stack
Daniel Sturtz
Samuel Sugarman
Kenneth Svolto
Craig Taylor
TG Thomas
Kim Tirendi
Hetta Towler
Sarah Tunnell
Annalise VanVranken
Robert and Steven Varon
Megan Voss
Sierra Voss
Dustin Walker
Katie Walker
Roger Walker
Jason Walkow
Steven Wangler
Trenna Wangler
Virginia Waters
Brian Weinberg
Morgan Weiss
Imari Whalen
Jason Williams
Jason Yaker
Marissa Yaker
Nader Zaidan
Vanessa Zajfan
Jennifer Ziegler
Kevin Zoltan



"Our long-time partnership with the Chef Ann Foundation has centered around supporting school districts to create transformative, deep, and lasting change. As we continue to collaborate on Get Schools Cooking, Salad Bars to Schools, Healthy School Food Pathway Fellowship, and ScratchWorks, we are committed to transforming the way students eat and think and the way school districts positively impact the environment and their communities through scratch cooking!"

Kim Herrington, Director of Programs
Whole Kids, a Project of Whole Food Market Foundation

Our Financials

Statement of Financial Position

Assets

Current Assets	
Cash and cash equivalents	\$1,809,035
Contributions receivable	\$2,615,526
Prepaid expenses	\$17,379
Other Assets	\$400
<hr/>	
Total Current Assets	\$4,442,340

Liabilities & Net Assets

Current Liabilities	
Accounts payable	\$914,605
Accrued compensation & benefits	\$267,900
<hr/>	
Total Current Liabilities	\$1,182,505

Net Assets

Net assets, without donor restrictions*	(\$1,815,205)
Net assets, with donor restrictions	\$5,075,040
<hr/>	
Total Net Assets	\$3,259,835
<hr/>	
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$4,442,340

*The negative amount is due to a time restricted grant receivable of \$2,615,526 for costs incurred but not reimbursed (cash in hand) until the following year.

Statement of Activities

Operating Support & Revenue

Support	Contributions & grants	\$8,703,738
Revenue	Enrollment fees	\$40,042
<hr/>		
Total Operating Support & Revenue		\$8,743,780

Operating Expenses

Expenses	
Programs services	\$6,770,032
Supporting services:	
general & administrative	\$601,622
Supporting services: fundraising	\$559,477
<hr/>	

Total Operating Expenses	\$7,931,131
---------------------------------	--------------------

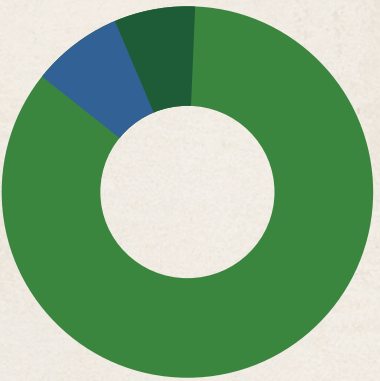
Operating Support & Revenue in Excess of Operating Expenses	\$812,649
------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------

Other Changes	
Interest & other income	\$6,631
<hr/>	

Change in Net Assets	\$819,280
-----------------------------	------------------

Net Assets, Beginning of Year	\$2,440,555
-------------------------------	-------------

Net Assets, End of Year	\$3,259,835
--------------------------------	--------------------



85% Program Services
\$6,770,032

8% General & Administrative
\$601,622

7% Fundraising
\$559,477

Major Program Expenses

Healthy School Food Pathway	\$4,556,696
Custom District Support	\$798,291
USDA Partnerships	\$543,668
Get Schools Cooking	\$525,046
Bulk Milk & Salad Bars to Schools	\$483,703




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